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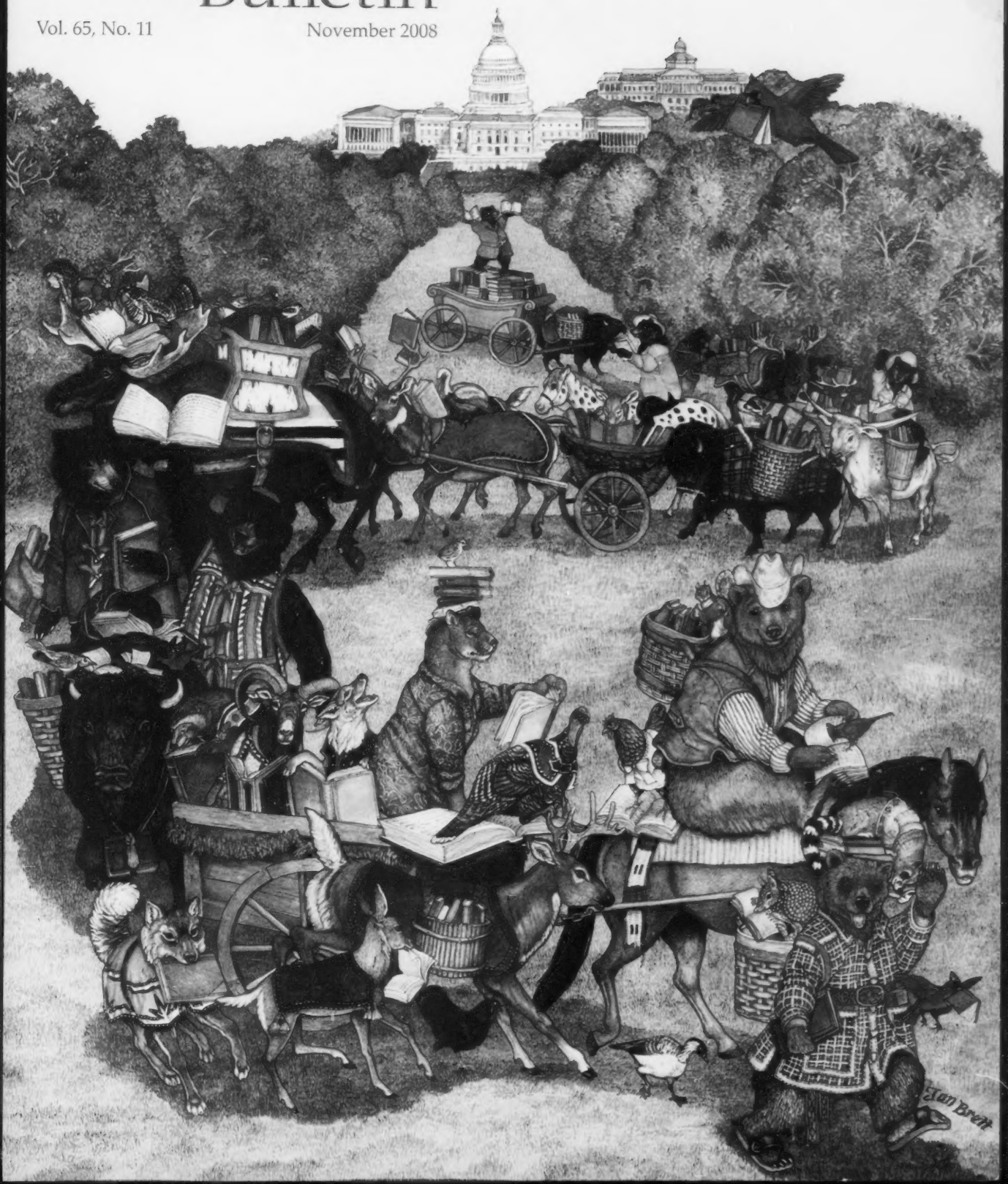
Information Bulletin

Vol. 65, No. 11 November 2008



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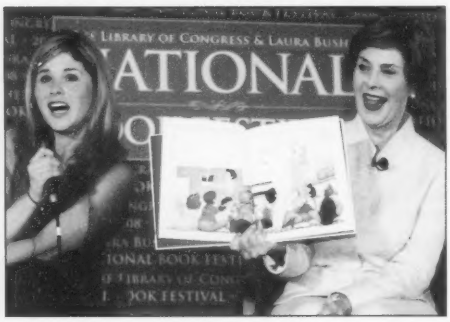
Information Bulletin

Vol. 67, No. 11 November 2008

JAMES H. BILLINGTON
Librarian of Congress



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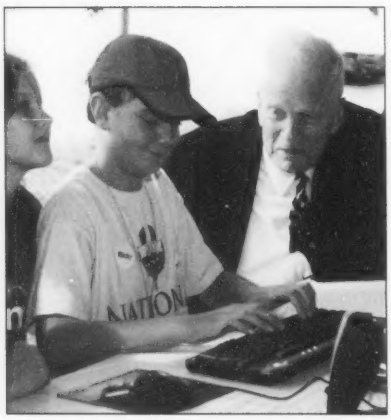

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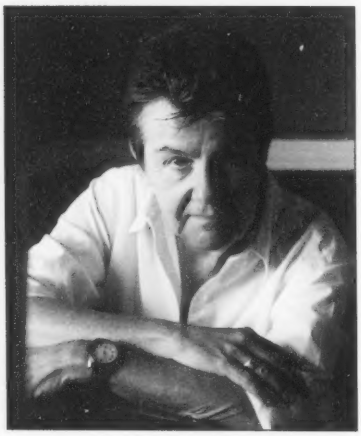

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On the Cover: Award-winning illustrator Jan Brett featured dozens of state birds and animals in her imaginative poster for this year's National Book Festival.

Cover Story: More than 120,000 lovers of books and reading descended on the National Mall in Washington to hear their favorite authors and storytellers and to celebrate literacy at the Library of Congress' eighth National Book Festival, hosted by First Lady Laura Bush, on Sept. 27. 191

The Laura & Jenna Show: The first lady and her daughter read from a new book they co-authored, "Read All About It." 195

A Personal View: More than 100 authors and illustrators came together to tell an inside view of the White House and its history. 199

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Reaching Out: The Library of Congress pavilion at this year's festival offered visitors of all ages a wealth of opportunities to a learn, explore and celebrate. 201

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Touch of the Poet: New Poet Laureate Kay Ryan opened the Library's literary season in a program of selected readings from her lifetime of work. 204

Read Every Day: The Library and a literacy advocacy group will work to encourage parents to read to their children daily. 205

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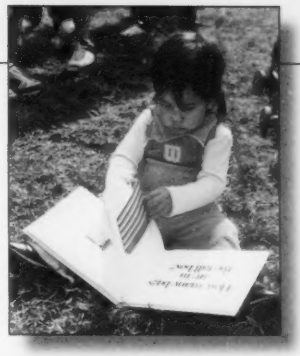


Let it Pour

Spirits Soar at 2008 National Book Festival

By Gail Fineberg

Gail Fineberg

At the end of many rainy days there appears a rainbow, and at the end of some rainbows a pot of gold, which is located just to the right of the U.S. Capitol at the Library's Thomas Jefferson Building in this photo taken late Saturday afternoon, Sept. 27, at the 2008 National Book Festival.

The misty, squishy morning did nothing to dampen the enthusiasm of book lovers who showed up early to grab book bags and the best pavilion seats—then join a swelling crowd to hear and see their favorite authors at the eighth National Book Festival on Saturday, Sept. 27.

"What an awesome experience. It's very cool to meet all these famous people. The number of people walking around with books is just awesome. I'll come every year!" said Emily Mason, a pre-kindergarten teacher who had just moved to College Park, Md., from Rochester, N.Y.

"The National Book Festival is a joyous celebration of reading and an inspiration for new generations of creativity, " the Librarian said.

Earlier, as joggers splashed through puddles while passing by the Himalayan-like white pavilions on the nearly empty National Mall, 600 Library staffers and Junior League volunteers in vibrant teal-blue festival T-shirts fanned out to their duty posts. They set out book bags the color of their shirts and piles of programs, uncrated stacks of bottled water, and found golf carts to be loaded with VIPs and security staff.

The first of many long lines of the day formed shortly after 8 a.m. to go through security into the Children's pavilion for a presentation by First

2008 NATIONAL BOOK FESTIVAL

Lady Laura Bush and her daughter Jenna Bush Hager, who were to discuss and read their new children's book, "Read All About It."

The Librarian of Congress, James H. Billington, welcomed them and opened the festival. "The National Book Festival is a joyous celebration of reading and an inspiration for new generations of creativity," the Librarian said. "We are grateful to Mrs. Bush for making this a signature event in the nation's capital for the last eight years. Her love of reading has inspired millions to enjoy the Library of Congress in Washington and online and to use their own hometown libraries everywhere."

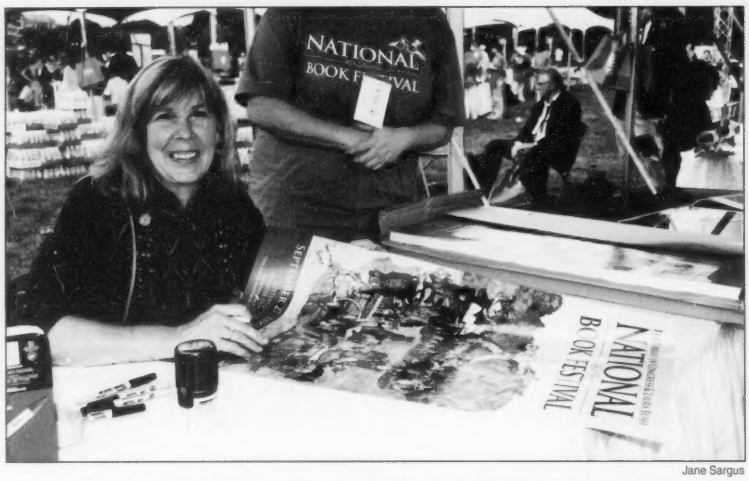
After their talk, Mrs. Bush and her co-author signed books in the secured area for an hour. The crowd of autograph seekers in their line had the unintended effect of deterring some visitors who wanted to see a presentation by artist Jan Brett, a children's book author who had also created this year's festival poster.

Despite that short-lived problem and the increasing temperature and humidity, spirits ran high all day, even through a 4 p.m. downpour that drove festivalgoers into all available pavilion space. Which wasn't much.

Starting a few minutes before the festival opened at 10 a.m., the crowds started to swell, reaching the estimated 120,000 hoped for and filling nearly every pavilion to overflowing.

People stood five deep around the edges of the Fiction and Mystery pavilion to hear Sir Salman Rushdie, knighted this year by Queen Elizabeth for his service to literature and declared the best-ever winner of the Booker Prize. Amid cries from the audience of "Down in front," Rushdie—obviously impressed by the size of the crowd—was heard to mutter, "It's Woodstock."

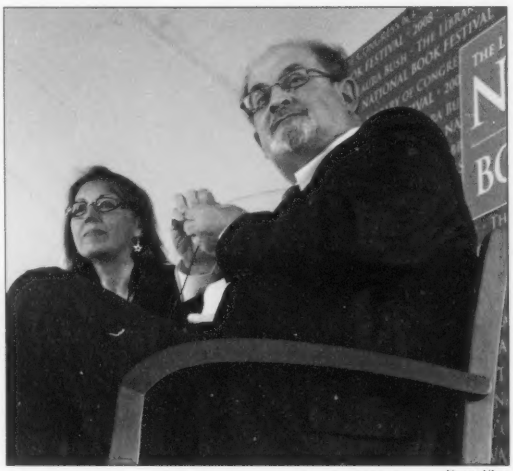
When Marie Arana, editor of Washington Post Book World, introduced him, she said she hoped the National Book Festival—which the Post has helped sponsor all eight years—would continue even though Laura Bush, who conceived the idea in 2001, would be no longer be the hostess. The crowd roared its approval, as did every other pavilion audience who heard the same hope voiced throughout the day.



Jane Sargus

Jan Brett autographs a poster that she designed for the festival. She also demonstrated her drawing ability in the Children's pavilion and talked about the African animals that inspire her.

Sir Salman Rushdie and Marie Arana team up for a lively series of questions and answers during his 2008 National Book Festival appearance. She asked him if he considers himself to be a pioneer of post-colonial literature, and he replied, "I'd say post-globalization as well," adding that he tries to paint his stories on a big canvas.



Nancy Alfaro

To nurture that possibility, the Library has reserved space on the National Mall for the 2009 National Book Festival. Fundraising will be a key issue. "I hope they'll continue the book festival after the Bushes leave office. It's a very important event, like the Chautauqua of the 19th century," said Beverly Spencer of Rockville, Md., who was attending for the third time.

With more than 70 authors and illustrators to hear from, both serious readers and celebrity-seekers found their marks. Hundreds of children and teens were there.

"I've been coming to this festival every year for eight years, and this is as good as it gets," said a history buff, who by the end of the day had heard eight authors—Rushdie, Gordon Wood, Tony Horowitz, Kimberly Dozier, David Maraniss, Walter Isaacson, Michael Dobbs and Rick Atkinson.

Sheldon Krebs, who with a group of State Department colleagues was standing near the History and Biography pavilion, said the festival is "one of the best events going on in Washington, D.C. It's a don't-miss event."

"There's almost too much going on at the same time. I'd like to see it all," said his associate Rob Laing, in D.C. temporarily to study Persian.

Soaking up the words of fiction writers Rushdie, Philippa Gregory,

Nancy Alfaro

Marisa de los Santos
(Fiction and Mystery)
Marisa de los Santos began her career as a poet, then switched to the novel. "I love the big open space of the novel," she said. "I love being immersed in a different world and being in the company of people who are profoundly not me."

Nancy Alfaro

Geraldine Brooks
(Fiction and Mystery)
Geraldine Brooks tells the story of the Sarajevo Haggadah (a 14th-century illuminated Hebrew manuscript) in her historical fiction "People of the Book." The former Wall Street Journal war correspondent got the idea for the book in a bar in Bosnia.

Jane Sargus

Pauline and Arthur Frommer
(Home and Family)
"It's incumbent upon us to offset the high cost of transportation with lower prices on land, for hotels and food," said Arthur Frommer, who launched his travel-guide series more than 50 years ago. Daughter Pauline also dispenses travel tips.

Nancy Alfaro

Philippa Gregory
(Fiction and Mystery)
Philippa Gregory writes historical fiction about England's royals from a woman's point of view rather than "stereotypes, as presented by males with gender prejudices." A case in point is her portrait of Mary, Queen of Scots, in "The Other Queen."

Susie Neel

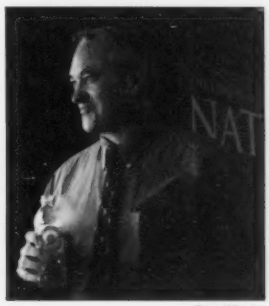
Joseph Bruchac
(Teens and Children)
Joseph Bruchac depicts Native American participation in the Civil War in his children's book "Marching Toward the Thunder." "It's a story of struggle between brothers and sisters, who each had to fight for their family," he said.

Katherine Blood

Michelle Singletary
(Home and Family)
"Make do with what you have," advises syndicated financial columnist Michelle Singletary. "I'm not panicking because I learned how to handle money from my grandma, Big Mama. She taught me to be frugal."

Barry Wheeler

Kimberly Dozier
(History and Biography)
The CBS News correspondent provides a first-hand account of the plight of injured men and women in Iraq in her book "Breathing the Fire." On assignment in Baghdad, Dozier was critically injured by a car-bomb that killed two of her colleagues.



Barry Wheeler

Michael Dobbs
(History and Biography)
Michael Dobbs describes how close the world came to a nuclear war during the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis in his book "One Minute to Midnight." I wrote the book because the book I wanted to read didn't exist."

Gwendolyn Brooks and others was Ron Starr of Bethesda, Md., a semi-retired pediatric orthodontist. "Everywhere I go I read," he said. "I can whip off 10 chapters in the mornings while waiting for the anesthetic to numb my patients."

Former NFL running back Tiki Barber, whose side-lining football injury gave him time to collaborate with his brother on picture books for kids, packed them in, as did book-writing basketball stars Chris Duhon, Bob Lanier and Ivory Latta, cake-baker Warren Brown, financial writer Michelle Singletary and singer Dionne Warwick.

Warwick and Barber both spoke of discovering the joy of authorship in the midst of otherwise rich lives.

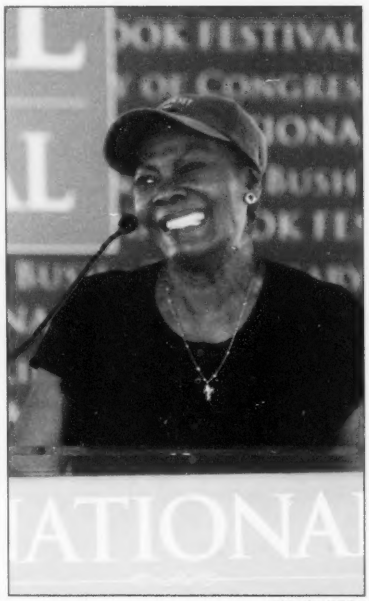
"I love to sing, I love to talk and I found out I love to write," said Warwick to an admiring Children's pavilion crowd, many of whom grew up with her music. Others learned about her from her "quasi-autobiographical" book "Say A Little Prayer."

Barry Wheeler

Veteran journalist and biographer Walter Isaacson enthralls his History and Biography audience with stories about Albert Einstein, whose biography "Einstein: His Life and Universe" he wrote for publication this year. Isaacson portrayed Einstein as a "slow learner" who could not absorb information by rote but who thought in pictures; as a rebel who challenged longstanding principles of physics and alienated his professors; and as a patent office clerk who imagined riding alongside a light beam at 187,000 miles per second and figured out the theory of relativity while on a walk in the woods. He could not get a doctoral thesis published, Isaacson said, but his theories of relativity, energy and mass ($E=mc^2$), "the bending of light beams and warping of space," and the behavior of atoms "transformed our understanding of the universe."

Nancy Alfaro

Author-journalist-musician James McBride visits with fans after his discussion of his new book set on the Eastern Shore, "Song Yet Sung," about "the web of relationships that existed in slavery." Of his popular 1996 memoir of growing up in Jewish (mother) and African American (father) cultures, he said, "If I had known so many people would read 'The Color of Water,' I'd have written a better book." McBride said: "I believe we are more alike than different."



Michaela McNichol

Singer Dionne Warwick told a standing-room-only crowd in the Childrens pavilion the story of "Little D," who grew up on Sterling Street in East Orange, N.J., and discovered her musical talent.

Warwick said her publisher had advised her to "write what you know." So she did just that. Her picture book tells the story of Little D, growing up on Sterling Street in East Orange, N.J., who discovers her talent for singing. With a message of "If you think it, you can do it," the book encourages children to find their talent and embrace it.

Like Warwick, Barber began writing for children to inspire them. And he writes what he knows. Barber's most recent work "Go Long!" joins "Game Day" and "Teammates." "If you believe in yourself you will always be successful," Barber added, quoting his mother, who raised him and his identical twin brother, Ronde, to set and achieve their goals.

Barber's favorite is the first book he and his brother wrote. "By My Brother's Side" underscores the bond between the brothers that was both strained and strengthened by a sports injury.

"Your book inspired me to be nicer to my brother," said a young fan in the audience. "You made my day," beamed Barber.

The Pavilion of the States and Let's Read America pavilions were always busy with activities to amuse and educate children, such as the ever-popular maps of the states that kept them moving from table to table to get their maps stamped for each state. Waves of people throughout the day washed into the Library of Congress pavilion, with its displays of the Library's inter-

continued on page 198

Bushes' Book Captivates Young Audience

By GAIL FINEBERG

Security at the Children's pavilion was tight. A long line trailed back from a magnetometer to enter the pavilion to hear and see the first lady, Laura Bush, and her daughter Jenna Bush Hager discuss and read their new book, "Read All About It."

"I'm so excited! I can't wait to meet Mrs. Bush," exclaimed a little girl, grass-hoppering around, tugging on her grandmother's hand.

Once inside the pavilion, the excitement mounted. "Is that Mrs. Bush? Where will she come in? Is that Jenna? Is that Mrs. Bush? Is the first lady as important as the president?" the 9-year-old asked, while illustrating her own story, titled "The Little Girl Who Met the First Lady."

At last the program began. The Librarian of Congress, James H. Billington, opened the 2008 National Book Festival, the eighth and last one that he and Laura Bush would produce together, and welcomed her as "the Reader-in-Chief."

"It is a special honor to introduce to you this morning the woman who not only conceived of the National Book Festival, but who is here today as an author in her own right," the Librarian said as the audience rose to applaud the first lady and her co-author.

The Bush women quickly slipped into familiar former roles, Mrs. Bush as a school librarian and teacher and Mrs. Hager as a teacher. They took charge of the pavilion classroom. They had their chairs rearranged so they could sit side by side, moved the podium out of the way, and solved a lapel-mike sound glitch by sharing a hand-held microphone.

Then they invited all the children to sit on the grass in front of them so they could see the pictures that "Junie B" series illustrator Denise Brunkus had created for "Read All About It."

"We might be in trouble with security, but we're sure they're safe," said Mrs. Hager.

"Jenna and I had a wonderful time writing this book," began Mrs. Bush.

"We told stories to each other about the students we had taught," said Mrs. Hager, adding that while they were growing up, she and her twin sister, Barbara, used to listen to the stories that their mother told after school about her students.

"There was a real Tyrone I taught," said Mrs. Bush, who described the model for their character Tyrone Brown, the class clown, who thinks he rules the school.

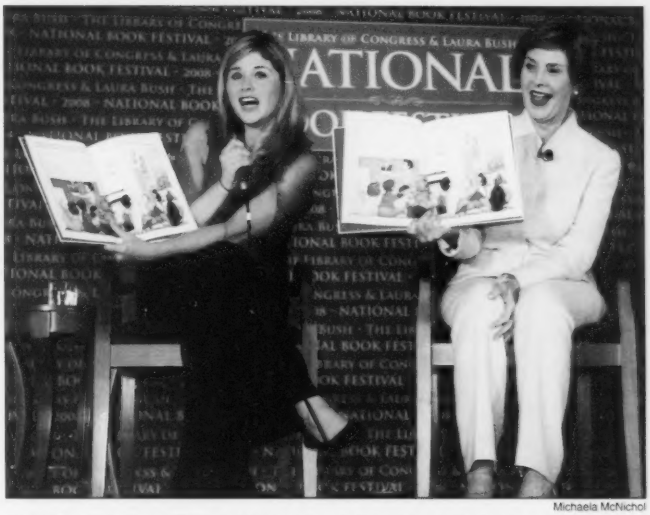
"His older brother was in my fourth-grade class, and Tyrone would creep through the door and around the room in back of me and then scream and scare the children," Mrs. Bush recalled.

"He scared her, too," interjected Mrs. Hager with a laugh.

The next year, Mrs. Bush taught second grade, and who was in her class but Tyrone? "I had him for a whole year," she said, describing his disruptive behavior until one day a story hooked him on books.

Then the two took turns reading their published story of Tyrone, whose world "turned inside out" when he discovered the other kids were so engrossed in a story about an astronaut that they weren't watching him launch a missile from the reading rug.

"What is your favorite book?" one child asked during question time.



Michaela McNichol

Teacher Jenna Bush Hager and former teacher Laura Bush take turns reading from their new book, "Read All About It."

"I have a million favorite books," Mrs. Bush replied, "especially those my children enjoyed, such as 'Hop on Pop.' When their father read it to them, they took it literally and jumped up and down on him." The children giggled at the notion of kids jumping up and down on the president of the United States.

Mrs. Bush concluded the program by sharing with the children that she had decided to become a teacher in the second grade. "I just loved my second-grade teacher," she said. "We became good friends and stayed good friends until she died. So go to school tomorrow and hug your teacher."

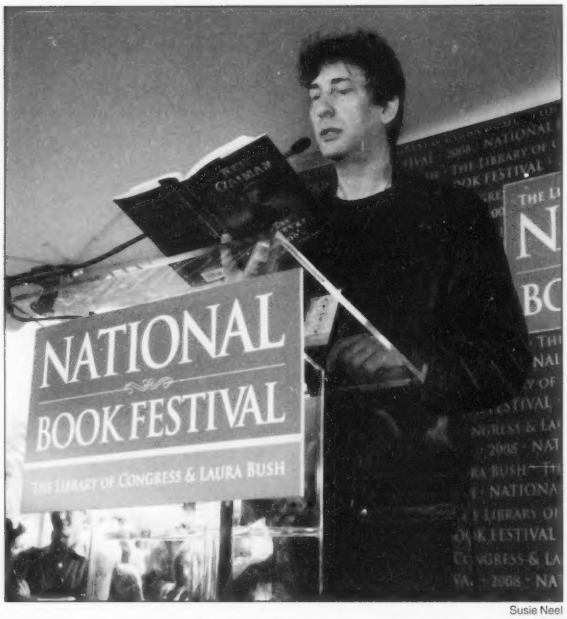
During a pause in the book-signing line while a press photographer took pictures of the celebrities, the young writer finally had a chance to ask her question: "What was your favorite book in the fourth grade?"

"The Secret Garden," responded Mrs. Bush.

The little girl who met the first lady was so focused on every detail of the first lady's ensemble—"white earrings, a white necklace, a white silk pantsuit and white shoes"—that she forgot to jot the answer in her reporter's notebook. ◆

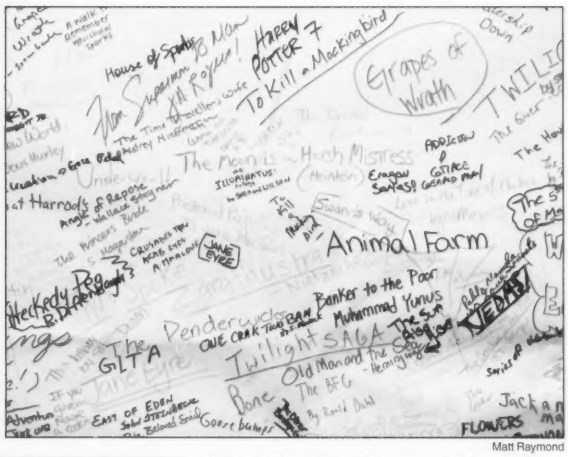
Gail Fineberg is editor of The Gazette, the Library's staff newsletter. Helen Hayes-Loane, a fourth-grader at Lewistown Elementary School in Thurmont, Md., contributed to this story.

2008 NATIONAL BOOK FESTIVAL



Susie Neel

Left, Neil Gaiman, introduced as "the most versatile writer of our time," reads from "The Graveyard Book" which took him 23 years to write.

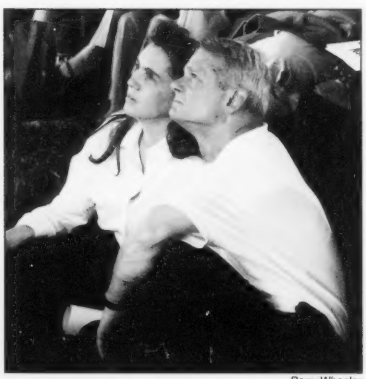


Matt Raymond

"Favorite Book" mural signed by reading fans at the festival

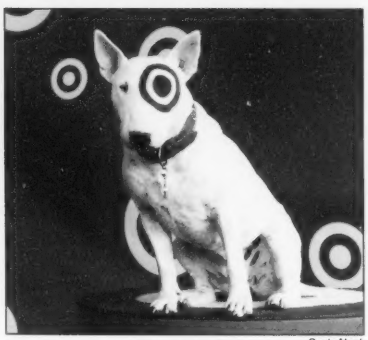
Barry Wheeler

"The spirit of American women is very special," said Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison, R-Texas. She discussed her latest book, "Leading Ladies: American Trailblazers" (2007), which she said she wrote as a follow-up to "American Heroines: The Spirited Women Who Shaped Our Country" (2004) to include women in the military and in science. She also talked about strong women in her family, including a great-great-great-great grandmother, who, with other women, walked from Texas to Louisiana to protect their children from raids by the Mexican Army and Indians.



Barry Wheeler

Authors captivate the History and Biography pavilion audience.



Susie Neel

Bullseye the Target pooch is top dog in the Let's Read America II pavilion.

2008 Festival Pavilions and Authors

Children
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Tiki Barber
Jan Brett
Marc Brown
Laura Bush &
Jenna Bush Hager
David A. Carter
Doreen Cronin
Betsy Lewin
Kadir Nelson
Doreen Rappaport
David Shannon
Judy Sierra
Dionne Warwick

Teens & Children
Sponsored by Target

Mary Brigid Barrett
Joseph Bruchac
Sharon M. Draper
Neil Gaiman
Steven Kellogg
Katherine Paterson
Andrea Davis Pinkney
Matthew Reinhart
Robert Sabuda
Jon Scieszka
Charles R. Smith, Jr.
R. L. Stine
Judith Viorst

Fiction & Fantasy
Sponsored by The James Madison Council

Louis Bayard
Geraldine Brooks
Sandra Brown
Marisa de los Santos
Philippa Gregory
Andrew Klavan
James McBride
Brad Meltzer
Richard Price
Francine Prose
Peter Robinson
Salman Rushdie
Alexander McCall Smith

History & Biography
Sponsored by The James Madison Council

Rick Atkinson
Michael Dobbs
Kimberly Dozier
Tony Horwitz
Kay Bailey Hutchison
Immaculée Ilibagiza
Walter Isaacson
David Maraniss
Cokie Roberts
Bob Schieffer
Daniel Schorr
Paul Theroux
Gordon S. Wood

Home & Family
Sponsored by Target

Ellen Birnbaum
Warren Brown
Eleanor Clift
George Duran
Arthur Frommer
Pauline Frommer
Julie Morgenstern
Mike Richman
Nancy Schulman
Cathy Scott
Michelle Singletary

Poetry
Sponsored by National Endowment for the Arts

Eavan Boland
Dan Chiasson
Elsa Cross
Michael Lind
Michael S. Harper
Molly Peacock
Stanley Plumly
J. Allyn Rosser
Kay Ryan,
Poet Laureate
Consultant in Poetry
for 2008-2009

Special Guests

Bob Lanier and
NBA/WNBA
players: Chris Duhon
and Ivory Latta
River of Words
featuring Pamela
Michael and David
Gewanter

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US Airways

Friends
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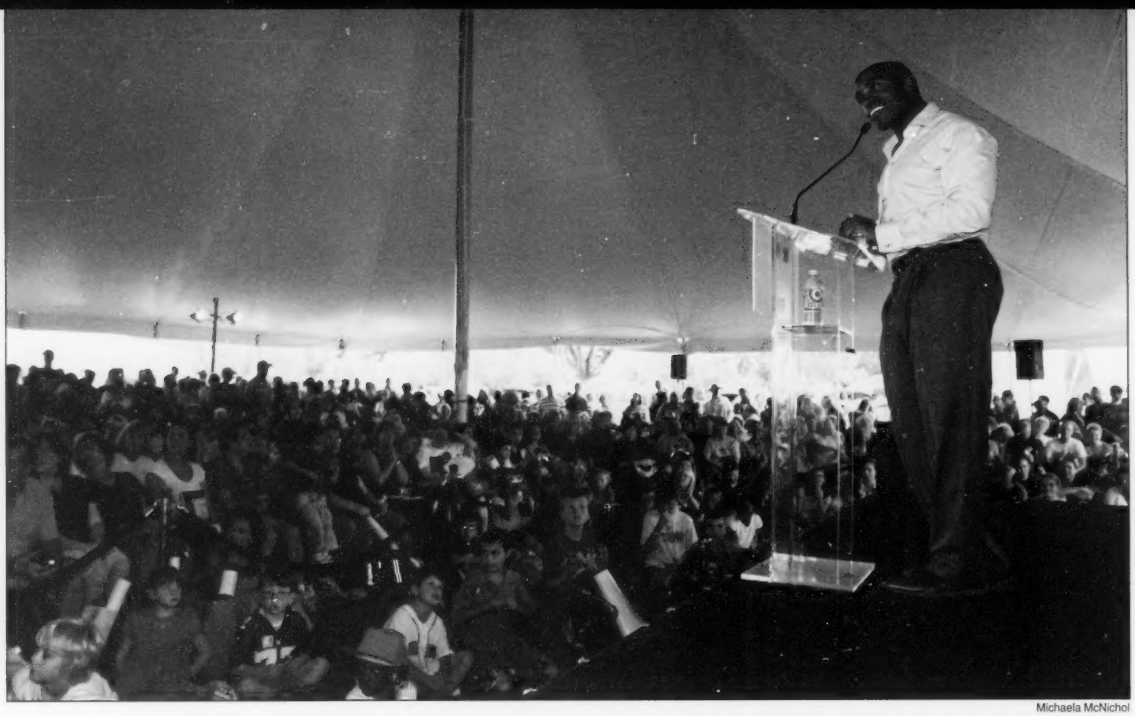
National Endowment for the Humanities

Special Thanks
C-SPAN2:Book TV
The Junior League of Washington *once again provided hundreds of volunteers to support the National Book Festival and the promotion of reading and literacy.*



Michaela McNichol

"If you believe in yourself, you will always be successful," Tiki Barber's mother always told him. He passes her wisdom along to kids in the Children's pavilion.

Festival
continued from page 194

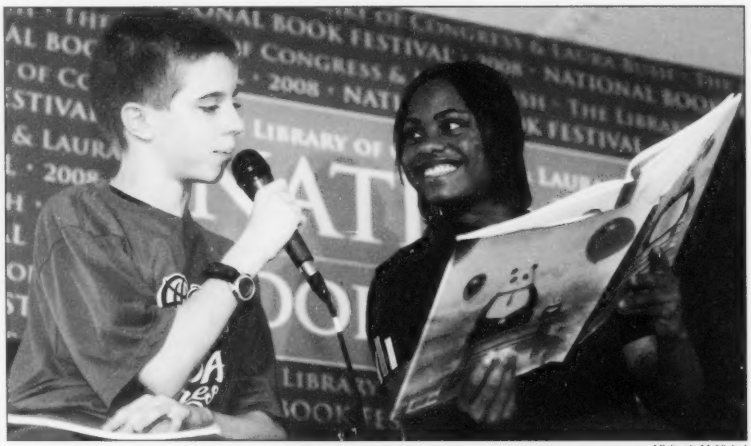
active technology, online exhibitions, demonstrations of the new World Digital Library, preservation tips and the beloved graffiti wall.

Although hundreds of book titles of every kind ended up on five crammed, bedsheet-size writing surfaces, some who approached just couldn't decide on one favorite among hundreds of beloved books, so they handed back the marker, turned around and left, said staffer Oxana Horodecka.

Early in the day, the Library of Congress Experience table was full to capacity as book enthusiasts explored the personalized **myLOC.gov** site and the digitalized exhibitions "Creating the United States," "Thomas Jefferson's Library" and "Exploring the Early Americas." Closing the festival was a message of peace, hope and faith from a survivor of the 1994 Rwandan genocide.

"Life is a joy today. Every day I live it as a gift," said Immaculée Ilibagiza, who received a standing ovation from the History and Biography pavilion audience even before she spoke.

Ilibagiza told her story. While she was home on a holiday visit from Rwanda's National University, her family became worried that Hutu violence would erupt against their tribal group, the Tutsis, as the result of the death of Rwanda's president, a Hutu.



Michaela McNichol

Reading in front of an audience with WNBA star Ivory Latta was a big deal for Garrett Hiltz of Falls Church, Va. He said it was one of the best moments of his life.

Susan Harper

The story of Rwandan survivor Immaculée Ilibagiza touches the hearts of the Librarian and Mrs. Billington.

Ilibagiza's father insisted that she seek shelter in the home of a family friend, a Hutu pastor. She took refuge with at least seven other Tutsi women in the pastor's 3-foot-by-4-foot bathroom, in which they hid, mostly hungry and continually terrified, for 91 days.

The women could not speak; they could not move; they could not flush the toilet unless the other toilet in the house was being flushed, lest someone suspect they were there.

Armed with machetes, Hutu marauders, some of them people she had known, searched the house several times for Tutsis. One day, sensing that her killer was but a few inches away, she experienced a crisis of faith. But she listened to an inner voice that suggested she pray: "If You are there, please don't let the killers find the door to the bathroom."

A Hutu had his hand on the doorknob to the bathroom, but suddenly he turned to the pastor and said, "You know what? We trust you," and left the house.

After reading a Bible she requested from the pastor, she came to believe that "the people who are hunting us, they don't get it. And you, hating them, is not going to change anything."

Smuggled by the pastor to safety in a French refugee camp, Ilibagiza learned that her family had been killed. But she found the compassion to visit the man who killed them, and forgave him.

Eventually Ilibagiza arrived in the United States, went to work for the United Nations and began writing her first book, "Left to Tell: Discovering God Amid the Rwandan Holocaust," which has been translated into 19 languages. She said she has heard from many readers who have followed its message to forgive. That, she said, is "thrilling." This year she published "Led by Faith: Rising from the Ashes of the Rwandan Genocide." ◆

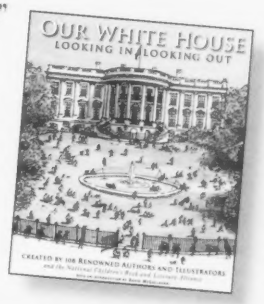
Gail Fineberg is editor of The Gazette, the Library's staff newsletter.

"Our White House"

By AUDREY FISCHER

White House, O White
House, place of great fame,
Don't you think it's a bit of
a shame
That for this grand residence,
Home of our presidents,
That's the best we could do
for a name?

—Jon Scieszka



While other authors spoke about their books at the National Book Festival, a group of authors and illustrators gathered to discuss one special new book: "Our White House: Looking In, Looking Out" (Candlewick Press).

Created by 108 renowned authors and illustrators and the National Children's Book and Literacy Alliance (NCBLA), the book and companion Web site (**www.ourwhitehouse.org**) are intended to expand young people's knowledge of American history.

"The White House is the most important, the most famous, the most historic, the most beloved house in all the land, and it is filled with—no, overflowing with—stories," said historian David McCullough in the book's introduction.

NCBLA Executive Director Mary Brigid Barrett told how the book came about. "We looked for a book that uses all of the arts [poetry, short story, illustrations] to excite children about American History. Ultimately, we decided to make it." She added, "Whoever ends up in the White House next year, they need to understand that it's our White House and these are our stories."

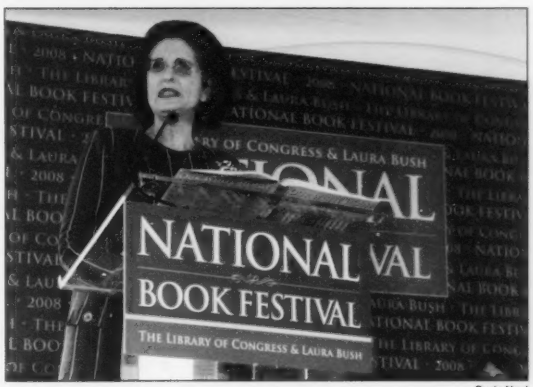
Three other contributors read excerpts from the book: Steven Kellogg, who discussed his illustration of presidential pets; Jon Scieszka, who read one of his poems, and another by Children's Poet Laureate Jack Prelutsky about one special presidential pet; and Katherine Paterson, who read her essay on the White House press corps and Natalie Babbitt's essay about the seven presidents who hailed from Ohio.

Barrett acknowledged another contributor, Center for the Book Director John Y. Cole, who contributed an essay about how first lady Laura Bush and the Library of Congress created the National Book Festival in 2001.

A special surprise contributor, Lynda Johnson Robb (oldest daughter of former president Lyndon B. Johnson and former first lady of Virginia), referred to herself as a "former inmate" of the White House.

In her essay "My Room," at 1600 Pennsylvania Ave., Robb discusses what she learned about her room's strange history. Hoping to be sleeping in a bed perhaps "christened by Abigail Adams herself," Robb learned that her room once belonged to Willie Lincoln, who died of typhus at age 12, and was the location of President Lincoln's autopsy and the site of the death of President Truman's mother-in-law.

"My curiosity had uncovered information that was better left swept under the rug, no matter who had stood on it before," she said. ◆



Susie Neel

Linda Johnson Robb says what she learned about her room in the White House "was better left swept under the rug."

'Ambassador' Jon Scieszka Engages and Entertains

By AUDREY FISCHER

It was quite a weekend for Jon Scieszka, a former teacher from Brooklyn, appointed the first National Ambassador for Young People's Literature (2008–2009) by the Library of Congress and the Children's Book Council (**www.childrensbookambassador.com**).

Sporting the ambassador's medallion, which was presented to him on Friday, Sept. 26, and having appeared with first lady Laura Bush and the president at the National Book Festival gala that evening, Scieszka came to the festival on Saturday to meet his fans.

"Check it out," said the children's author, dubbed "The Stinky Cheese Man" (by virtue of his popular book title). "I get to brag about other people's books."

Promoting literacy is an issue close to his heart. Scieszka is the founder of Guys Read (**www.guysread.com**), a reading-promotion program "to help boys find stuff they like to read." On Friday, he joined the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress and the Read It Loud! Foundation in announcing a new initiative to encourage parents to read to children. *(See story on page 205.)*

Michaela McNichol

Jon Scieszka shares stories of his childhood and reading just after accepting his new ambassador's medalion.

With five brothers, Scieszka knows more than a little about what boys like. The latest title in his Trucktown series is "Smash, Crash!" His next book is titled "Knucklehead," an affectionate term used by his father for all of his sons.

"My dad used to take us to construction sites," recalled Scieszka. "He'd say, 'all of you knuckleheads get in the car.'"

As a child, Scieszka liked to read about chaotic families like his, rather than the tame world of "Dick and Jane" that was required reading from the 1940s to the 1960s. He mocked the stilted syntax of the "Dick and Jane" series.

"The way they kept repeating everyone's names—Dick, Jane, Sally, Mother and Father—I thought they were afraid they'd forget them."

"I preferred reading about cats in hats and green eggs and ham," said Scieszka.

So now he strives to write stories that boys can relate to. To prove his point, Scieszka read an excerpt from "Knucklehead" about sharing the bathroom with his five brothers. ◆

Michaela McNichol

Scieszka, Wally Amos (in green hat) and friends announce a new initiative to promote reading.

Library of Congress Pavilion Inspires and Informs

Visitors to the Library of Congress Pavilion at the 2008 National Book Festival experienced some of the ways that the Library collects, preserves and provides access to knowledge; sparks imagination and creativity and celebrates achievement.

As the day's festivities began, a crowd began to gather at the Library's pavilion to learn how to preserve their home library materials, engage in interactive educational games available on computers and write the name of their favorite authors and books on the ever-popular graffiti wall.

Early in the day, the Library of Congress Experience table was filled to capacity with visitors wishing to learn more about the Library's new exhibitions and companion Web site, **myLOC.gov**. Library staffers responsible for the Web site watched from a short distance, looking for ways the interface could be tweaked to the users' advantage.

A girl of about age 7—after sizing up the huge blank canvas that was the pavilion's "Graffiti Wall"—seized a marker to become the first visitor to ink the name of her favorite book: "Nancy Drew."

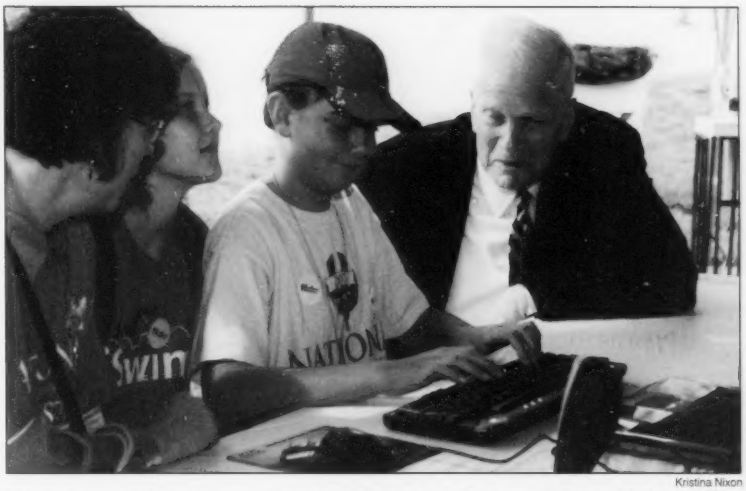
The crowds steadily increased as festivalgoers paused to watch two videos about the Library: an overview of the Library, produced by the History Channel; and extra features included in some DVD packages of Disney's "National Treasure II—The Book of Secrets," which was filmed at the Library.

Some gathered to see demonstrations of the Library's pilot photo-tagging project with Flickr while others got a preview of the multilingual World Digital Library (an international collaborative digital project that will be launched in April 2009). Demonstrations of how rare documents are digitized mesmerized people of all ages. A special "Did You Know?" display revealed some of the more intriguing items in the Library of Congress' collections, from the copyright for the design of the Statue of Liberty to the personal papers of Johnny Carson.

D.C. resident Richard Miller was surveying the pavilion's display on preservation and restoration of home library items. He also came to the festival hoping to hear some favorite authors speak. A frequent visitor to the Library, Miller is a fan of its movie screenings.

"I've been [to the Book Festival] three times over the years," said Georgie Almon, a graduate student pursuing a degree in International Development at George Washington University. "I really like books in general, and it's a great promotional event for literacy."

This year she brought a friend, fellow GWU International Development graduate student Ryan Evans. "I'm new to Washington. I've been here a month and I'm enjoying the festival," Evans said. "The World Digital Library is very cool." ◆

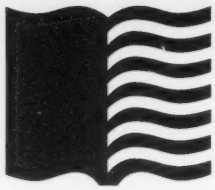


Kristina Nixon

Librarian of Congress James Billington, his grandson Nelson and Nelson's friend Julia try out myLOC.gov and its feature, "Create Your Own Experience."

Nancy Alfaro

Kimberly Peach shares some tips on how to preserve precious old books and papers with Rita Wenham in the Library of Congress pavilion.



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

IN THE NEWS

By ERIN ALLEN

The Library's eighth annual National Book Festival garnered widespread press attention in advance of this highly anticipated event. Day-of coverage and post-festival coverage were equally brisk.

For the third year, an online pressroom on the Library's Web site provided the media with background materials, high-resolution images, B-roll, podcasts of author interviews and other audiovisual resources. For the first time, local television journalists participated by introducing some of the authors.

Several long-lead media previewed the event. These included **The Washington Post, Washington Post Express, Baltimore Sun, Washingtonian, Associated Press, USA Today, Los Angeles Times, Harper's Bazaar, BizBash, The Downtowner, Washington Blade, Virginian Pilot, FamilyFun, Washington Family, The Agenda News (Family Column), The Hill Rag, Education Week, American Teacher** and **About.com**.

The Library relied on an online presence and the blogosphere to reach a wide audience. The Library kept the public informed of plans for the festival on its blog (**www.loc.gov/blog/**). Stories appeared on other popular blogs and Web sites, including **thedctraveler.com, www.jaunted.com** and **www.gadling.com**. The Library also produced a series of 19 author podcasts, available for download free of charge through the Library's Web site (**www.loc.gov/podcasts/**).

Festival sponsors helped with the outreach effort. For example, **Barnes & Noble** developed a dedicated National Book Festival channel on its Web site that featured webcasts from the 2007 festival and podcast interviews with authors participating in the 2008 festival. **PBS** also actively promoted the event through a customized email invitation, which was distributed to a list of 20,000 reading-promotion partners.

The Washington Post, a charter sponsor of the National Book Festival, ran a variety of pre- and post-festival stories, including a pullout guide in the **Sunday Book World** section, a feature on its "Weekend's Best" page and online chats with participating authors on **washingtonpost.com**. Book World Editor Marie Arana produced a video clip of the festival for washingtonpost.com, which was picked up by **American Libraries Direct**. In her online coverage of the festival, Arana wrote, "The war in Iraq, the economic turmoil, the campaign vicissitudes had receded to a parallel universe. Only books and their authors reigned."

Washington Post reporter Bob Thompson remarked, "Popular it certainly was on Saturday, despite continually threatening weather. Dark clouds loomed over the festival's gleaming white pavilions. A night of rain had left the Mall soaked and muddy. But none of that stopped people from overflowing the available chairs for many readings."

• Librarian of Congress James H. Billington and First Lady Laura Bush brought widespread attention to the event through interviews on **Good Morning America, Fox & Friends** and **WRC-TV (NBC-4)** and stories about their collaboration on the festival in **Parade, The Washington Times, Weekly Reader** and the **Associated Press**. The first lady told AP reporter Brett Zongker that she hopes her signature Washington event becomes a lasting tradition and noted her intention to urge her successor to host the event as well.

"I love the whole idea of the National Mall being turned over to literature for a Saturday a year. It still has that feeling of a lot of book lovers together, people who love to read and who love books and who are very happy," she said.

For the first time in the festival's history, Laura Bush made an appearance as an author, along with daughter Jenna. Speaking to an overflowing crowd in the Children's pavilion, they introduced their new book, "Read All About It!"

AP reporter Christine Simmons observed, "Dozens of youngsters were quickly organized and led to the front of the stage inside the pitched tent where the authors sat closer than the public usually gets to the first family. As children shyly stood by the table to get their book signed, the mother and daughter asked for their names and if they liked to read. They blew kisses to some youngsters as the rode away in their parents' arms."

Simmons' story also ran in **The Washington Post, the Denver Post, Star Tribune** (Minneapolis), **The Times of Trenton, The Times Union** (Albany) and the **Sacramento Bee**.

• National Ambassador for Young People's Literature Jon Scieszka, who appeared at the festival and at the private National Book Festival gala the night before the event *(see story on page 200 this issue)*, was popular with the press. Interviews with Scieszka appeared in **JustOneMoreBook.com, About.com** and **The Washington Post**'s parenting blog. The newly appointed ambassador authored his own humorous play-by-play description of his appearance at the gala for **Publishers Weekly**. **AP** reporter Deb Riechmann, who attended the gala, penned a story about Scieszka's appearance that was picked up by more than 40 outlets across the nation.

The day before the festival, Scieszka received his official ambassador medallion and entertained a class of local fifth-graders from Brent Elementary School. Roll Call reporter Tricia Miller noted, "Children have been enthusiastic about the ambassadorship. Scieszka asks audiences what kind of 'ambassador stuff' they think he should get. Among the suggestions have been small flags for the front of his car, a helicopter and—Scieszka's personal favorite—$1 million."

• **C-SPAN** taped author presentations in the History and Biography pavilion, for later broadcast. For its part, the Library taped all of the author presentations, many of which were scheduled for same-day broadcast on the book festival Web site.

Maggie Linton of **XM Radio** and Sam Litzinger of **CBS Radio** interviewed participating authors at the festival in a special studio area designated just for that purpose. XM Radio also ran a series of pre-festival interviews on **This is Audible**, the **Sonic Theatre** channel and the **Maggie Linton Show**. These interviews combined with day-of interviews were used to compile a "Best of Festival" segment for the Maggie Linton Show. Interviews on the Sonic Theater channel were also downloadable on **www.audible.com**. ◆

Erin Allen is a writer-editor in the Library's Public Affairs Office.

Universal Design Is Critical

ADA Center Official Praises, Challenges Library

By AUDREY FISCHER

Marian Vessels is a fan of libraries and a big fan of the nation's library for being "a model" of accessibility for persons with disabilities.

"Libraries hold a special place in my heart," said Vessels, director of the Mid-Atlantic ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) Center, who recently delivered the keynote address for the Library's celebration of Disability Employment Awareness Month. "In elementary school I won an award from my local library for reading 100 books over summer vacation. My first job was as a library page, and I narrated the first ADA-compliant film for the American Library Association while working in the Maryland Governor's Office," she added.

As a survivor of breast cancer as well as a car accident in college that left her in a wheelchair, Vessels knows firsthand about disabilities that are "obvious" and those that are "hidden." Vessels estimates that one in five working adults has some degree of disability, and that this figure will increase as the baby boomers age.

"That's why 'universal design' is so critical to all people," she said.

A relatively new concept in accessibility, universal design is a broad-spectrum solution that helps everyone, not just people with disabilities. And it recognizes the importance of how things look, which is particularly important in the case of historic buildings.

"People think if a building is 'historic' it is sacrosanct," observed Vessels. "But it can be made accessible without destroying its historical nature."

She gave as an example the Maryland Governor's mansion in Annapolis, where she served as executive director of the Governor's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities. With support from former Maryland Governor Donald Shaefer, a ramp was added with a brick facing that made it barely visible.

Before that modification, Vessels only had access to the building through the kitchen. The "seamless integration" now makes the building accessible to people with wheelchairs, walkers and strollers, as well as to an aging population having increased difficulty walking stairs.

Michaela McNichol

Marian Vessels, director of the Mid-Atlantic ADA Center, visits with Eric Eldritch, access program manager for the Library, prior to Vessels' keynote address for Disability Employment Awareness Month.

Vessels, who spent part of the morning navigating between the Jefferson and Madison buildings, praised the Library for making its historic buildings and its resources accessible to staff and visitors.

"I compliment you on the strides you have made," said Vessels. "The Library of Congress has a long history of hiring persons with disabilities, especially persons from the deaf community." She noted the Library's provisions for people with disabilities in its emergency procedures and on its Web site, much of which is compliant with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, thereby giving the visually impaired access to electronic information.

Vessels also praised the Library's Assistive Technology Demonstration Center, which centralizes the Library's testing and funding of equipment that can accommodate persons with disabilities. And she observed that the Library's new visitor experience makes it possible for "all people with all types of abilities to experience the Library."

"I challenge you to continue in the proud tradition of the Library of Congress," said Vessels. "You are up to the challenge. With all challenges come great outcomes."

"Most other exhibits are designed for people standing up," observed Vessels. "But kids are my height. Do we really want to exclude them? If we do, then short little people won't grow up to be patrons of the arts."

Vessels challenged the Library to continue to do "more with less" for persons with disabilities in these tough economic times.

"I challenge you to continue in the proud tradition of the Library of Congress," said Vessels. "You are up to the challenge. With all challenges come great outcomes." ◆

Less Is More

Poet Laureate Kay Ryan Opens Literary Season

By DONNA URSCHEL

Kay Ryan, the 16th Poet Laureate Consultant in Poetry, likes to say that she's "always advocating for less"—such as less excitement, less limelight, less heartache. She opened the literary season at the Library of Congress with a reading of 29 compact yet exquisite poems that conveyed her wisdom, humor and pursuit of "less."

Friendly and wryly funny, Ryan spoke to a standing room-only audience of 300-plus in the Mumford Room on the evening of Oct. 16. Many of the poems she read came from her books "Say Uncle" or "The Niagara River." She also read a few poems that will appear in an upcoming poetry volume.

Librarian of Congress James H. Billington introduced Ryan as "a wonderful, American original," whose poems combine brevity with depth. He told the audience that Ryan likes her poetry to "leave you freer and not more burdened—to provide you with more oxygen in the air."

Christina Koci Hernandez

Ryan immediately won over the crowd. "I find myself extremely content with all things happening here." She thanked the many who showed up to hear her read. "I'm used to walking into a half-full place. This laureate-thing does the trick."

Ryan, who was appointed to the position in August for the 2008-2009 term *(see Information Bulletin, September 2008)*, was born in 1945 in San Jose, Calif., and grew up in the San Joaquin Valley and the Mojave Desert. Her father was an oil well driller and sometime-prospector. She received both undergraduate and graduate degrees from the University of California, Los Angeles. Since 1971, she has lived in Marin County.

Ryan launched into her first poem, "Matrigupta," which was inspired by "Ripley's Believe It or Not." She said the book, for a long time, has been a source of inspiration. "Ripley likes the sensational. I like the de-sensational." In "Ripley's," Ryan read how long-ago poet Matrigupta had written a poem that so pleased Rajah Vicrama Ditya that he was given the entire state of Kashmir. The poet ruled Kashmir for five years (118-123), and then abdicated to become a recluse.

"This is a poem about 'less, please' and the dangers of rewards," said Ryan. Earlier, at the National Book Festival on Sept. 27, Ryan said the poem "comments directly on my situation."

Matrigupta

(What a Trojan horse)
thought Matrigupta,
rewarded for his verse
by Rajah Ditya
with one of the nicest
states in India.
(Why couldn't it
have been a gold watch
or an inscribed plate?
I'll never write again
at this rate.)
"I am too blessed,"
went the little thank-you
poem he had rehearsed,
but already his words
were getting reversed
and he said, "I am
blue tressed," which was
only the first indication
of how things were in Kashmir
before his abdication.

Ryan then read another poem about seeking less, titled "Blandeur." She called it "one of my classic less poems" and "a little prayer."

Blandeur

If it please God,
let less happen.
Even out Earth's
rondure, flatten
Eiger, blanden
The Grand Canyon
…
Unlean against our hearts.
Withdraw your grandeur
From these parts

In her third poem, "Composition," Ryan said she was reacting to a quote from the former Poet Laureate Joseph Brodsky. "Language is a diluted aspect of matter," Brodsky once said. Ryan, who is seduced by the texture and power of words, disagrees. "He went pretty far, but not far enough … This poem is for Brodsky. This is what we Poet Laureates do, we write to each other."

Composition
No. Not diluted.
Flaked; wafered;
but not watered.
…
a vast heraldic shield
of beautiful readable
fragments revealed
as Earth delaminates:
how the metals scatter,
how matter turns
animate.

Ryan went on to read 26 more poems, each one a perfectly cut and polished gem. She read "Patience," describing the trait as something she had to learn. "As a poet, one acquires a lot more patience than one is supposed to have. Poetry is not a speedy path to glory." She also read "The Fabric of Life," and said it was "something else I didn't want to learn about." In the poem she describes how there are "… hurts working far past/ the locus of rupture,/ attacking threads far beyond anything/ we would have said/ connects."

About 10 poems into the reading, Ryan announced, "Now onto Christmas." When the audience laughed at her abrupt segue, Ryan said, "That's the terrible thing about poetry readings. You go from one poem to another. Each poem is its own little world, and it's hard to move on." Her Christmas poem, "The Excluded Animals," is about the animals that don't get into the Nativity scene. Ryan called it a "pantheistic cheer."

Ryan also read "Home to Roost," in which the first few lines say "The chickens are circling and blotting out the day …" Ryan explained to the audience, "I had that poem on an editor's desk on Sept. 11. I had to take it back, because all of a sudden the chickens could be interpreted as airplanes, and the poem took on added significance. I just hate added significance."

Toward the end of the reading, Ryan included a poem about her mother titled "Things Shouldn't Be So Hard," one of her few poems about a person. Ryan said most of the time she finds writing about specific people to be "too sticky to handle." She prefers "cool" material.

Things Shouldn't Be So Hard
A life should leave
deep tracks:
ruts where she
went out and back
to get the mail
or move the hose
around the yard …

The passage
of a life should show;
it should abrade.
And when life stops,
a certain space —
however small —
should be left scarred
by the grand and damaging parade.
things shouldn't
be so hard.

The reading was followed by a book signing and a reception, attended by most of the audience members, who stayed around to meet the master. Though Ryan prefers a quiet life of "less," the evening didn't comply. It appears she didn't mind. ◆

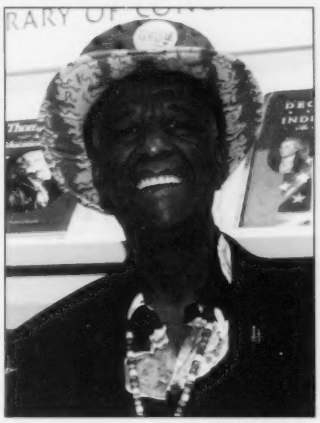
Donna Urschel is a public affairs specialist in the Library's Public Affairs Office.

Partnership Formed to Promote Reading to Young

The Center for the Book in the Library of Congress and the Read It Loud Foundation have formed a partnership to encourage parents and other caregivers to read to their children daily. The goal of the partnership is to inspire 5 million parents and caregivers to read daily to their children by 2014.

According to the National Center for Education Statistics of the U.S. Department of Education, "reading to young children promotes language acquisition and literacy development and, later on, achievement in reading comprehension and overall success in school. The percentage of young children read aloud to daily by a family member is one indicator of how well young children are prepared for school."

"The Read It Loud program is a natural partnership for the Center for the Book, which has promoted reading and literacy since its establishment in 1977," said John Y. Cole, the center's director. "We sponsor several reading-promotion programs specifically for young people, such as the National Ambassador for Young People's Literature [**www.childrensbookambassord.com**], Letters About Literature [**www.loc.gov/loc/cfbook/letters/**], River of Words [**www.riverofwords.org**] and a lifelong literacy initiative [**www.literacy.gov**]."


Michaela McNichol
Wally Amos, chairman of the Read It Loud Foundation

"Picture a child sitting comfortably in his parent's lap, enjoying a story being read aloud. This child is discovering the gift of love, language, imagination and a promising future," said Wally Amos, chairman of the Read It Loud! Foundation. "With the support of the Library of Congress and our other sponsors, we will have 5 million parents and caregivers reading daily to children by 2014."

The program seeks participation by anyone who has children in his or her life and also will encourage persons with disabilities—parents, caregivers and children—to participate.

The Read It Loud program will be advertised in shopping malls throughout the country, through Web sites, in libraries and other locations. Popular children's characters such as the Cat in the Hat, Curious George and Clifford the Big Red Dog will also draw attention to the program.

Other partners in the program are the Children's Book Council, First Book and the Boys & Girls Clubs of America.

Reactrix is donating advertising space in shopping malls. Other sponsors are Verizon, Gulfstream, Evergreen, Savannah College of Art and Design, Chips & Cookie and Uncle Wally's. ◆

Pat Fisher

River of Words co-founder Pamela Michael (center) is joined by (from left) River of Words winners Carlos Alameda from Lancaster, Pa., and his teacher Barbara Strasko, and Cia Makrigiorgos, from Vienna, Va. Poet David Gewanter from Georgetown University also helped moderate the program, which was held in the Teens & Children Pavilion. River of Words is an environmental poetry and art contest co-sponsored by the Center for the Book.

News from the Center for the Book

Promoting Reading at the National Book Festival

By JOHN Y. COLE

Each year since the National Book Festival's inception in 2001, the Center for the Book has developed, coordinated and overseen the nomination and participation of the festival's guest authors, illustrators and poets. The center also organizes and manages the popular Pavilion of the States and is an active participant in the Let's Read America pavilions.

In turn, the National Book Festival helps the center further its own mission of stimulating public interest in books, reading, literacy and libraries. For example, authors who take part in the festival often participate in the Center's Books & Beyond author series, which is held at the Library of Congress throughout the year.

There are other mutual benefits. More than 30 state center for the book coordinators, several state center advisory board members and six of its national reading promotion partners participated in the 2008 festival. In partnership with Target (a Distinguished Benefactor of the book festival), the center sponsors the Letters About Literature reading and writing promotion program for young people. The program was promoted at the 2008 festival by the center in the Pavilion of the States and by Target in the Let's Read America pavilion. Another Center for the Book reading promotion project for young people, featured in the Teens & Children's pavilion, was the River of Words environmental art and poetry project. *(See Information Bulletin, June 2008.)*

Authors, Illustrators and Poets

The 2008 National Book Festival featured 71 authors, illustrators and poets. Participants are nominated and supported by their publishers, with a high priority to nationally known and award-winning nominees. Individual presentations and book-signings, which bring readers together with their favorite authors, are the heart of the National Book Festival experience.

More than 450 presentations by authors, illustrators and poets at the first eight National Book Festivals may be seen and heard on the Library's Web site at **www.loc.gov/webcasts**/. Taken as a whole, these presentations provide a snapshot of the remarkable talent and diversity of contemporary writers and writing in the first decade of the 21st century.

Pavilion of the States

Visitors of all ages flocked to the Pavilion of the States to learn about the reading and literacy projects and the literary traditions of all 50 states, the District of Columbia and the territories of American Samoa, Guam, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Especially popular with young readers was "Discover Great Places Through Reading," a free map of the United States that could be presented at each table for an appropriate state sticker or stamp. On the back of the map, a list of "52 Great Reads About Great Places" highlighted books for young people chosen by representatives from all 50 states, the District of Columbia and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

The Center for the Book was joined in the pavilion by representatives from four of its national reading promotion partners: the Institute of Museum and Library Services, a festival patron that sponsored the pavilion itself and the participation of most of the state participants; the National Endowment for the Humanities, which sponsored the participation of the nine state centers hosted by state humanities councils; the American Library Association, a frequent project co-sponsor; and the Junior League of Washington, which provided approximately 400 volunteers for the 2008 festival, including more than 40 in the Pavilion of the States.

Two other Center for the Book reading promotion partners were part of the 2008 festival: the National Endowment for the Arts, a festival patron that sponsored the Poetry pavilion; and the National Basketball / Women's National Basketball Association's "Read to Achieve" program, which was featured in the Children's Pavilion.

Seven festival authors and illustrators made scheduled visits to their state tables to sign autographs and to greet and be photographed with their friends and fans. They were Tiki Barber (Virginia), Joseph Bruchac (New York), Maria de los Santos (Delaware), Katherine Paterson (Vermont), Jon Scieszka (Michigan), Michelle Singletary (Maryland) and Gordon S. Wood (Rhode Island).

Pat Fischer

Vermont author Katherine Paterson at her state's table in the Pavilion of the States signs a book for one of her fans.

Librarian of Congress James H. Billington visited the Pavilion of the States, making a special visit to the table where congressional wives were selling "The Congressional Club Cookbook." He also appeared at the following state tables: New Hampshire, Michigan, Montana, Nevada and Vermont, as well as American Samoa and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Wally Amos, the chairman of the Read it Loud! Foundation and a festival guest of the Center for the Book, visited the table of his home state of Hawaii.

Let's Read America Pavilions

Reading promotion activities sponsored by the festival's corporate sponsors were presented in the two Let's Read America pavilions. Festivalgoers enjoyed having their pictures taken with Bullseye, the Target dog, and having their own photos taken in Target's Big Read Chair.

Other contributors whose reading programs were featured were AT&T, the Library of Congress Federal Credit Union, PBS Kids and PBS Kids Go!, Penguin Group (USA), Scholastic Inc. and U.S. Airways. Activities included individual and group reading demonstrations and appearances by beloved cartoon and storybook characters. Once again, children were encouraged to climb abroad Scholastic's Magic School Bus to meet Ms. Frizzle, the science teacher, and Dirtmeister, geologist extraordinaire. ◆

Michaela McNichol

Ms. Frizzle, the science teacher from the Magic School Bus, autographs a young reader's book on the festival grounds.

John Y. Cole is director of the Center for the Book and author coordinator for the National Book Festival.

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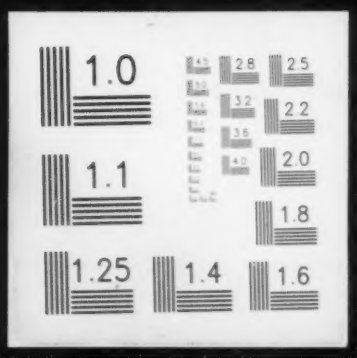
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